

THE SONGS
OF HEBREW
HISTORY.

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BY
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OAKVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

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TO
MY WIFE.

PREFACE.

THIS little book is an attempt to place the poetical passages of the historical books of the Old Testament in their historic setting, or occasion; to express them in their natural form of poetic rhythm, and to set forth, in brief, their substance and arrangement.

No attempt has been made to reason out at length the intricate problem of date and authorship, but the principle on which these may be determined is stated, and the historic setting, as well as the probable occasion for the poem, is given.

Nor was it found possible to give reasons for any choice in cases where the translation differs from other received versions of Scripture. This could only be done in a more extended treatise.

All that is hoped for is, that the translations and explanations may enable readers to better understand some of those portions of Scripture often found so difficult.

JOHN MCNAIR.

Oakville, Ont.,

November 12, 1902.



CONTENTS.

I. HOME SONGS.

I. MARRIAGE SONGS :	PAGE.
(1.) Marriage Song of Adam. Gen. 2:23,24. . .	11
(2.) Samson's Sayings. Judges 14:14,18; 15:16.	12
(3.) Songs in Ruth :	
(a) Her Entreaty of Naomi. Ruth 1:16,17.	14
(b) Encouragement by Boaz. Ruth 2:12. .	15
(c) Blessing of the Elders. Ruth 4:11,12.	16

II. BIRTH SONGS :

(1.) Of Rebekah over Jacob and Esau. Gen.25:23.	17
(2.) Of Hannah over Samuel. I. Samuel 2:1-10.	18

II. SONGS OF WEAL AND WOE.

1. Curses of the Fall. Gen. 3:14-19.	26
2. God's Covenant with Noah. Gen. 8:21,22. . .	28
3. Of Noah on his Sons. Gen. 9:25-27.	29
4. Of Isaac on Jacob and Esau. Gen.27:27-29,39,40.	30
5. Of Jacob on his Sons. Gen. 49:2-27.	32
6. Aaron's Benediction. Num. 6:24, 25, 26. . .	39
7. Of Moses on Israel. Deut. 33:2-29.	39
8. Of Balaam on Israel. Num. 23:7-10, 18-24 ;	
24:2-9 15-25.	47

III. WAR SONGS.

	PAGE.
1. Song of the Sword of Lamech. Gen. 4:23,24.	57
2. Song of Miriam and Moses. Exodus 15:1-18,21.	58
3. Book of the Wars of Yahweh.	
(1.) Crossing the Arnon. Num. 21:14,15. . . .	61
(2.) Song of the Fountain. Num. 21:17,18. . . .	62
(3.) The Taunt Song. Num. 21:27-30. . . .	62
(4.) Yahweh as Leader. Num. 10:35,36. . . .	63
4. The Book of Jashar.	
(1.) Song of Joshua. Joshua 10:12,13. . . .	64
(2.) David's Dirge over Saul and Jonathan.	
II. Samuel 1:19-27.	65
(3.) Dedication of the Temple. I Kings 8:12,13.	67
5. The Song of Deborah. Judges 5:2-31. . . .	68
6. David's Lament for Abner. II. Sam. 3:33,34. . . .	73
7. David's Hymn of Triumph. II. Sam. 22:2-51.	74

IV. ROYAL AND NATIONAL SONGS.

1. The Song of Moses. Deut. 32:1-43. . . .	83
2. David's Last Words. II. Samuel 23:1-7. . . .	89
3. Psalm of Praise to Yahweh. I. Chron. 16:7-16.	91

I. HOME SONGS.

My beloved made answer,
And to me said:
 Up, my loved one, my fair;
 Hie thee away!
For lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over, and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth,
And the time of merry song is come;
And the voice of the turtle
Is heard in our land;
The fig tree seasons her unripe fruit,
The vine in blossom fragrance yields.
 Hie thee away, my love, my fair;
 Hie thee away!

—*Song of Songs* ii. 10-13.

I. — *Marriage Songs.*

Marriage among the Hebrews was accompanied with mirth and song. The home-coming of the bridegroom with the bride was made the occasion of great rejoicing and merriment. The festivities, which often continued for a week, consisted largely in the observance of ancient marriage customs, in feasting, dancing, lively conversation, and in singing the praises of the bride and groom. The best examples of such songs are preserved to us in "The Song of Songs," and in Psalm 45. In the historical books only the merest shreds of these ancient odes are preserved to us, but these serve to give us some insight into ancient marriage customs, to reveal the sacred and tender ties of the home life of Israel, and to illustrate the relation between God and his people.

(1) *Marriage Song of Adam*: Gen. ii. 23, 24.

And the man said,

23. Now, bone of my bone is this,
Flesh of my flesh.
She called shall be woman,
For out of man taken.

24. For this shall a man
Leave his father and mother,
And cleave to his wife,
And they shall become one flesh.

On the horizon of time stands the first man, viewing the long procession of created things pass slowly before him. He has been yearning for the promised help-meet. How delighted, when, after conning and naming them all, and, finding no affinity or companionship in them, he sees woman stand before him, one like unto himself, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Worthy she to be called woman; for was she not taken of God secretly from his side? She is thus his companion, dependent on his strength, the counterpart of his person, the complement of his life. Because of her affinity with him in nature, and her promise to satisfy heart and life, man leaves his father and mother, and cleaves to his wife, and they henceforth become one.

(2) *Samson's Sayings*: Judges xiv. 14, 18; xv. 16.

Samson, designed of God the deliverer of his people, fell in love with a Philistine maiden at Timnah, down the valley from his Zorah home. On one of his visits a young lion roared against him in the way, but in a moment of inspired strength he slew it, nothing in hand.

On returning he found bees and honey in the carcass. Soon after, at his wedding, he propounded the following riddle to the thirty young Philistines whom he had invited to the feast:—

(a) *Samson's riddle*: Judges xiv. 14.

14. Out of the eater came something to eat,
Out of the strong came something sweet.

Samson also offered them a wager if they could solve the riddle before the seven days of the feast were over. After vain endeavors to solve the enigma, they appeal with threats to his bride to beguile him of the secret, and she, after tearful entreaty, exhausts his patience, and, on the last day of the feast, secures it for them. Then they before sunset hasten to Samson, and triumphantly declare their answer. Samson hotly replies.

(b) *Samson's answer*: Judges xiv. 18.

18. With my heifer, had ye not ploughed,
Then my riddle ye had not found,

meaning thereby, that, as only by secretly ploughing with a man's heifer, could one uncover with the plough, and find his hidden treasure, so, only by dealing covertly with his bride, could they find the answer to his riddle.

He will pay the forfeit, but he does so with the common garments stripped from thirty of their slain countrymen, and he rewards the duplicity of his wife by deserting her. A foray of the Philistines into Judah follows, the men of Judah satisfying their enemies by delivering Samson bound. Samson meets the exulting wrath of his old foes by breaking his bands, and, with the jawbone of an ass, slaying a multitude of their men, saying of his feat—

Samson's Taunt: Judges xv. 16.

16. With an ass's jawbone, heaps on heaps,
 With an ass's jawbone I a thousand men slew.

The grim humor of this famous taunt can be better appreciated if we remember that the words for "ass," and "heap," are the same in the Hebrew, and that what Samson means to insinuate is, that

With an ass's jawbone, asses on asses,
 With an ass's jawbone I a thousand men slew.

The rhythm of the Hebrew is also worthy of noting. It is

Bilehi hohamor hamor hamorathaim
 Bilehi haḥamor hikkéthi 'eleph 'ish.

*(3) Songs in Ruth.**(a) Ruth's Entreaty: Ruth i. 16, 17.*

On Pisgah's brow stood Naomi, and her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Naomi was returning home from Moab to Bethlehem, and they had accompanied her thus far. Her heart is heavy. Her husband and sons are buried behind her in the land of the stranger. She went out full, she is returning empty. "The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." She urges them to return to their own home, their kindred, and their god. Orpah does return, but Ruth clings to Naomi entreating her with the following immortal pleading:—

16. Urge me not to leave thee,
To return from after thee:
For whither thou goest, I will go:
Where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
Thy people my people, thy God my God:
17. Where thou diest, I will die:
And there will I be buried:
Thus to me do Yahweh,* thus increase,
If aught but death divide us.

Thus may the kindly shining of tender love win the affection and service of those far off from the house of God.

Ruth accompanied Naomi to Bethlehem, and, directed and encouraged by her, she gleaned in the field of Boaz by day, and sought his resting place by night, saying in her heart, "I know my goel liveth."

(b) *Encouragement by Boaz*: Ruth ii. 12

And Boaz said,

12. May Yahweh thy labour reward,
And thy service be requited
By Yahweh, Israel's God, beneath
Whose wings thou'rt come for refuge.

Then, summoning the one nearer of kin to the gate of the city, with the elders as witnesses, he called upon him to buy or redeem Elimelech's portion of land. But the man, seeing that it meant the marring of his own inheritance, refused, and passed on his rights by drawing off his shoe, and handing it to Boaz.

And the elders were witnesses and said—

*The correct rendering for Jehovah.

(c) *Blessing of the Elders*: Ruth iv. 11, 12.

11. Give Yahweh this woman,
Come to thy house,
Be as Rachel and Leah,
Who built Israel's house.
In Ephratha be mighty,
In Bethlehem worthy;
12. Thy house be as Perez',
Whom Tamar bare Judah,
Of the seed Yahweh 'll give thee
Of this maiden.

“And Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David.”

2. *Birth-Songs.*

Two views of the Birth Songs of Scripture are held by students of the Word.

The first is, that they are contemporary with the birth, and the composition of the parent or friend, expressive of their joy and hope. That the birth, especially of a man child, among the Hebrews, should be the occasion of joy, and even of song, is both natural and probable; and especially would this be the case if the child were viewed as the token of divine favour, or the embodiment of religious or tribal hope. Such an event would be taken by the mother as a direct answer to her prayer, and a vindication of divine righteousness in the removal of her reproach, a righteousness she sees

in the wider spheres of divine activity. Among a primitive people, their traditions were handed down in poetical form, and were the parts easiest and longest remembered. That many of these early odes should be found incorporated in Scripture is most probable.

The second view is, that they are the product of a later age, and of the reflective mind in Israel. The Hebrews loved to picture the fortunes of the people of their acquaintance as foreshadowed in their ancestors, and, where traditions did not exist regarding them, coming down from antiquity, songs, arising out of other circumstances, but which seemed suitable to them, were attributed to them, by later writers. In so attributing appropriate songs of a later time to their ancestors, the writers of scripture merely exercise the rhetorical liberty of all early historians.

(1) *The Birth-song of Jacob and Esau* : Gen. xxv. 23.

Isaac dwelt with Rebekah in the tent of his mother at Beer-lahai-roi, but Rebekah was childless, and Isaac entreated the Lord for her. The Lord heard him, and Rebekah, his wife, conceived, and the children struggled together within her. Rebekah was filled with wonderment as to what it should mean, and said in her heart, What is the divine purpose of my life? To learn its meaning she sought the Lord at the nearest shrine, and the natural answer of God to her was,—

23. In thy womb there are two nations,
From thy bowels to be severed;
One be stronger than the other,
And the elder serve the younger.

The rivalry, which was such a marked feature of Israel and Edom in later times, began even before their birth. From their birth Israel and Edom were rivals, and, throughout their history, contended with each other; but Israel was stronger than and master of Edom. That such a tradition should be actual fact, and should have come down with the people to be afterwards incorporated in Hebrew history is both possible and probable.

(2) *Birth-song of Samuel*: I. Samuel ii. 1-10.

At the door of the temple of God in Shiloh stands Hannah, the beloved wife of Elkanah, disappointed because of long barrenness, goaded into despair because of the taunts of her rival, depressed because of the corruption of religion about her; stands, weeping sore, and praying, "O Lord, if thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then will I give him unto thee all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." God answered her prayer by the gift of a son, and she poured out her gratitude in song.

Hannah exults.

1. My heart in Yahweh doth exult,
Exalted is my horn;
My mouth is widened o'er my foes,
I joy in thy salvation.

Yahweh is holy.

2. None so holy is as Yahweh,
Beside thee there is none;
Nor indeed is any rock
Like to our God alone.

Weigheth actions.

3. Speak no more so proudly, proudly,
From your mouth no boasting go,
For Yahweh is a God of Knowledge,
Weighed by him actions too.

Favours the meek.

4. The bows of mighty men are broken,
But the halting girded stronger;
5. The full have hired out for bread,
But the hungry toil no longer.

Sovereign of life.

- While the barren hath borne seven,
She of many children faileth;
6. Yahweh killeth, and reviveth;
He to sheol sendeth, raiseth,
7. Maketh poor, and maketh rich;
Bringeth low, yea lifteth up;

8. Raiseth poor ones from the dust,
Lifteth needy from the dunghill,
That with princes they might sit,
Thrones of glory to inherit.

For Yahweh's are the pillars of earth,
The world on them he placed;

9. The feet of holy ones he'll keep,
The wicked in darkness silence.

The wicked warned.

- For not by strength shall man prevail;
10. Who strives with Yahweh 'll be crushed;
Thunder shall he in the heavens,
And judge the ends of earth.
Strength shall he to his king give,
His anointed's horn exalt.

Samuel grew up to glorify God within the sanctuary, to establish the religion of God in Israel, and to unite all the people under one king. In this, or its promise, Hannah saw the divine vindication of piety and humility. Her heart exulted, for her horn was exalted, and her mouth made wide over her enemies. No more should they speak arrogantly; for Yahweh is the searcher of hearts, and weigheth the actions of men. As with her, so with others, while the mighty are crushed, the full brought to poverty, and the fertile exhausted; on the other hand, the weak are strengthened, the hungry fed, and the barren made to bear. Yahweh is the sovereign ruler of all life. It is he that killeth, and maketh alive; maketh poor, and maketh rich;

bringeth low, and lifeth up. What he has done that shall he do.

“The feet of his holy will he keep,
And silence the wicked in darkness.”

II. SONGS OF WEAL AND WOE.

Yahweh bless thee, and thee keep;
Cause his face on thee to shine;
To thee be gracious, give thee peace;
On thee lift his face divine.

Num. vi. 24, 25, 26.

II. *Songs of Weal and Woe.*

The songs of Weal and Woe, like the Birth-songs, may be interpreted in either of two ways: either as contemporary of the events, and by the author of the blessing; or as the reflections of a later day, attributing to the patriarchs premonitions of the future, and incorporating them in verse. The view to be taken must in each case be determined by the evidence.

That parents in early times should be moved of the Spirit of God to have intuitions of the coming weal and woe of their children, and to express these forecasts in verse, is possible; and that these forecasts should persevere, and at length be embodied in history, is natural.

On the other hand, that the authors of Scripture should incorporate in their narrative the songs of blessing of a later day, embodying traditions, or suitable to, and interpretative of, the minds of their tribal or religious ancestors, is also probable. The Hebrew people delighted to trace the course of their national life back to its cause in the purpose of God, a purpose they conceived as graciously revealed to their great ancestors.

Being the idealizing of early traditions, the songs, from being local and domestic, become national and universal.

1. *Curses of the Fall*: Gen. iii. 14-19.

Adam was placed in the pleasant and fruitful garden of Eden, to keep and dress it, and, with Eve, to enjoy the fruits thereof. Living a simple and child-like life they dwelt continually in the enjoyment of divine favor, and had unruffled peace. As time passed there came to Eve, one day, the desire, sinuous and enchanting as a serpent, to taste a fruit which both God and her conscience forbade. Passion and conscience struggled within her in mortal conflict. The voice of God said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," the voice of passion said, "Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." She fell, and with her Adam. Their eyes were opened, but it was to their shame. They gained new knowledge, but it was the knowledge of sin. In vain did they seek to hide their shame, and to flee from the presence of God; for he found them in the cool of the day, hiding far away under the trees of the garden, smitten with remorse.

After hearing their vain attempt to hide their guilt, and to cast the blame on others, God pronounced upon them, in succession, the awful consequences of their action. In these there is a gleam of hope, a lifting of the eye to the conflict and victory of Christ on Calvary. The tradition of the Fall may have come originally from Babylonia, but, lying in the minds of a devout people, it was at length taken up by God's servant, puri-

fied of all its polytheistic elements, and shot through with true religious teaching.

And the Lord said unto the serpent,—

14. Cursed above all cattle thou,
O'er all beasts of the field;
Upon thy belly shalt thou go,
And dust thy food shall yield.
15. A feud I'll set twixt thee and her,
Between her seed and thine;
Thy head shall he with vengeance crush,
Thou strike his heel behind.

Unto the woman he said,—

16. Thy pangs, and bearing, I'll increase,
With pain thy young thou'lt see,
Still for thy husband long and yearn,
And he rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said,—

17. Since thou didst to thy wife give heed,
Eat from the forbidden tree,
'Gainst which I did expressly give
Commandment unto thee,

Cursed the ground because of thee,
With toil eat all thy day,
18. Thee thorns and thistles shall it yield,
And field-herb be thy stay.
19. By sweat of face shalt thou eat bread,
Till come to ground whence ta'en;
For dust thou art, and unto dust
Return thou shalt again.

The evil, begun in Eden, shall go down the ages, and there shall be long continued and bitter conflicts between good and evil in the world. In the struggle the righteous, who oppose evil, shall suffer, but at length One shall rise who shall crush it under his heel.

Woman, because of her station, as mother and wife, shall have many pains to endure, and sorrows to bear.

Man too, because the father of the race, will have to wring his living from the stubborn soil, and wage constant warfare against the thorns and thistles of his fields, until at last he returns to the ground from which he came.

(2) *God's Covenant with Noah*: Gen. viii. 21, 22.

Vexed by the growing corruption of the world, God brought upon them a flood, and destroyed man and beast, saving Noah and his family, and such animals as would be necessary to replenish a purified land. After long waiting, Noah left his ark and offered the sacrifice of gratitude unto God; and God, well-pleased, resolved, because man is weak and vain, no more to smite the earth with a flood.

And Yahweh smelled the savour sweet,
21. And straightway said within,
Nor ground, nor beast, since man thinks ill,
I'll curse, nor smite again.

22. But seedtime, harvest, cold, and heat,
 As long as earth shall last,
 And summer, winter, day, and night,
 Shall never, never pass.

(3) *Of Noah upon his Sons*: Gen. ix. 25-27.

When Noah left the ark he began to cultivate the vine, and, through much drinking of the wine, fell into shame. Ham, like the shameless Canaanites, of which he was ancestor, left his father exposed, and went and gleefully told his brothers. Shem and Japheth, moved with pity, covered their father's shame, and Noah, rising from his debauch, pronounced a curse upon Ham, fulfilled to this day in the subjection of the unchaste Canaanites: but a blessing upon Shem, with whom God dwells, and upon Japheth, in peace and wide dominion.

On Ham—25. Cursed be Canaan,
 Servant of servants
 Be to his brethren.

On Shem—26. Blessed Yahweh, God of Shem:
 Let Canaan be his slave,

On Japheth—27. Japheth, may God more enlarge,
 In tents of Shem to live,
 Canaan him to serve.

The relative position of the three great divisions of the human race are here set forth, and their destinies conceived, as forecasted in the conduct of the sons, and the pronouncement of their father. The Canaanitish

people always were, and are to-day, under a curse of submission, because of their licentiousness. The Semitic people enjoyed the presence of God with them, and power over Ham. The Japhitic people, though encroaching on the territory of Shem, sought his tent for fellowship and religious instruction.

(4) *Of Isaac on Jacob and Esau :*

Gen. xxvii. 27-29, 39, 49.

Isaac, the father of Israel and Edom, would, before dying, bestow his blessing upon Esau, his eldest and favored son. Conscious that Rebekah's artifice had hitherto interfered with his wish, he takes every precaution that this time it may not be diverted. But, both the cleverness of Rebekah and the divine purpose in the sons, decide the matter, and the blessing, meant for Esau, is unwittingly bestowed upon Jacob.

On Jacob—

27. Lo, the smell of my son
As the smell of a field,
Which Yahweh hath blessed.
28. May God also give thee
Of the dew of the heavens,
And the fatness of earth,
With plenty of corn and wine.

29. Let peoples too serve thee,
 And nations bow down to thee;
 Be Lord o'er thy fellows;
 Thy brethren honor thee;
 Cursed thy cursers;
 Blessed thy blessers.

Israel dwelt in a land, peculiarly favored of God, with the dews of heaven, and the richest products of the earth. She also occupied an enviable position of security, and sovereignty, over peoples round about her; and, especially for long years, over Edom. The historian fondly finds a forecast of the character, and destiny, of Israel and Edom in this story of their ancestors.

Upon Esau: Gen. xxvii. 39, 40.

Esau, after much entreaty, secures from his disappointed father a blessing, which is more of a curse than a blessing. Isaac is strangely in the hands of destiny, and speaks the words of God rather than his own wish.

“The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

And Isaac said—

39. Lo, from the fatness of earth
 Thy dwelling shall be;
 From the dew of heaven above;
 40. By the sword shalt thou live,
 And thy brother shalt thou serve;
 But, by roaming afar, it shall be,
 His yoke from thy neck thou shalt free.

Far different this from the blessing of Jacob. In the rocky arid desert of Edom, far from the fatness of earth, and the dew of heaven, dwelt the descendents of Esau, making their living by war and plunder, a vassal of Israel. But not for ever; for, after enjoying for a time the comparative freedom of their desert life, they, at length, broke away from Jacob.

(5) *Of Jacob on his Sons*: Gen. xlix. 2-27.

The ancient patriarch Jacob gathers about him his sons, and pronounces upon them, not so much a blessing, as a statement of their character and destiny. The writer is familiar with the position and lot of the tribes as they were afterwards settled in Canaan, and with their conduct, worthy, and unworthy, during the conquest, and throughout the period of the Judges. The poem is characterized by moral intensity, and national fervor.

And Jacob said,

2. Assemble and hear, ye sons of Jacob,
And hearken to Israel your father.

Reuben.

3. Reuben, my firstborn thou, my might,
The first-fruit of my prime;
Though noble in dignity, excellent in power,
4. Thou'lt, wanton as water, decline.

For thou wentest up
 To thy father's own bed,
 And there thou defiledst;
 To my couch he ascended.

Far more a sorrowful judgment, than a wish. His firstborn, the joy and hope of his prime, splendid in dignity, and mighty in strength; bubbling over with the fulness of life, Reuben was yet morally weak. Wanton as water, how could he prevail? As with Reuben, so with the tribe. At first strong and vigorous, at length wanton and wayward, at last unknown.

Simeon and Levi.

5. Simeon and Levi are brothers,
 With weapons of violence their contract;
6. My soul enter not their council,
 My glory join not their conclave.

- For in fury slew they men,
 And, with pleasure, oxen houghed;
7. Cursed be their fury, fierce,
 And their wrath so hard!
 Them in Jacob I'll disperse;
 Them in Israel divide.

Simeon and Levi, wild warlike tribes, in bitter revenge for insult to Dinah, their sister, massacred the Shechemites, and cruelly destroyed their substance. Because of this they brought on themselves a war of extermination by the Canaanites, which left them so weak, that Simeon becomes absorbed in Judah, and

Levi only maintains his identity as the priesthood of the people. Their revenge, and cruelty towards the Shechemites, were so revolting as to alienate the sympathy of their friends, bring upon them the fury of their enemies, and the judgment of God; to divide them in Jacob, scatter them in Israel.

Judah.

8. Thy brethren, Judah, shall thee praise,
And thine own hand shall be
On thy foe's neck, thy father's sons
Shall also bow to thee.
9. A lion's whelp, thou Judah, art,
My son gone up from ravin;
Stooping, crouching, as a lion,
A lioness, who shall rouse him?
10. The sceptre shall not turn from Judah,
Nor staff from between his feet,
Till he attain unto his own,
And him the peoples greet.
11. Binding his foal to the vine,
His colt to the tender shoot,
He washeth his garments in wine,
His vesture in blood of the grape;
12. Lustrous his eye from the wine,
And white his teeth from the milk.

The character, and prosperity of Judah, are here beautifully conceived. He holds an enviable and sovereign place among the tribes. He has gone up to his den

in the hills, and is like a young lion resting on his prey. Who dare rouse him? His sway shall increase, and his border extend, till he attain his own, and he be greeted by the peoples. Then shall he quietly, and peacefully enjoy the fertility of his lot, and the abundance of his inheritance. Thus too, shall he who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, come to his own, and enter, at last, into the felicity of his inheritance.

Zebulun.

13. Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea,
Even he at the haven of ships,
And his frontier on Zidon shall be.

Showing the courage, and stability of Zebulun, that won and maintained its territory in the face of the strong and warlike people of Zidon.

Issachar.

14. Issachar is a giant ass,
Among sheepfolds lying;
15. For he saw the rest-place good,
And the land that it was pleasant,
He to burden bowed his shoulder,
And to tribute was a servant.

Mighty, but stupid, like a great ass which surrenders its liberty, and independence, and submits to bear great burdens, if only allowed pasture, and peace. Such was the character of Issachar, who preferred indolent, un-

disturbed enjoyment of his fruitful land, even with tribute, rather than

“The glorious privilege of being independent.”

Dan.

16. Dan shall judge his people, .
As a tribe of Israel;

17. By the way a serpent,
By the path an adder,
Biting horses' heels,
Its rider falling after.

18. For thy salvation
I have waited Yahweh.

Though a small and insignificant tribe, Dan took its share in the judging of Israel, giving them Samson. Although few in numbers, it, by wily tactics in warfare, often overcame superior foes, persevering against mighty odds, awaiting the favor of God.

Gad.

19. Robber bands shall harass Gad,
But he shall goad their heel.

Throughout their history, Gad, in common with Reuben and Manasseh, was raided from the desert by hordes of Arabians, but Gad, in the most spirited way, ejected them.

Asher.

20. Fat shall be the bread of Asher,
And royal dainties shall he yield.

Occuping a rich territory, and with open markets in Phoenicia, Asher lived luxuriously at home, and made a name by his products abroad.

Naphtali.

21. Naphtali is a hind released,
Uttering sounds of beauty.

On the broad heights of Naphtali, with its radiant sky, and breezy outlook, life was free, and exhilarating. Man took on the sportive spirit of his mountain home.

Joseph.

22. Joseph is a fruitful bough,
Fruitful by a fountain,
And, high up o'er the wall,
Are his branches mounting.

23. Archers grieved, shot at, pursued him;
24. But steady his bow remained;
By the Mighty of Jacob's power
Was his strength of hand sustained.

- By the name of Israel's shepherd, Rock,
25. By thy father's God thee helps,
And the Almighty thee doth bless,
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep beneath,
Blessings of womb and breast.

26. Thy father's blessings have prevailed
O'er blessings of my fathers
Unto the limit of hills eternal,
And shall be on Joseph's head,
On his crown, from brethren parted.

Joseph, the fruitful bough, branched out into the populous and powerful tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, whose people were extending far beyond their boundaries. Tried sorely, as Joseph had been, by their enemies, they were, like him, abundantly sustained by the God of their fathers. They were also blessed with a thousand blessings, high as the heavens, deep as the depths, and eternal as the hills.

Benjamin.

27. Benjamin as a wolf shall ravin,
In the morning prey devour,
In the evening spoil divide.

This warlike character and life were developed in Benjamin from the rocky nature of the country in which he dwelt, in which, though it was difficult to conquer, and maintain, it was doubly difficult to secure a living.

(6) *Aaron's Benediction on God's Army*: Num. vi. 24,
25, 26.

After the numbering of the children of Israel, and regulations given for the march, God gives Moses a benediction, which Aaron and the priests are to pronounce upon the people of Israel, the Army of God in their journey.

24. Yahweh bless thee, and thee keep,
25. Cause his face on thee to shine,
26. To thee be gracious, give thee peace,
On thee lift his face divine.

Among the many blessings which God gives the church, the individual material comforts are the least. We are encouraged to pray for these, but more for God's keeping, and for the light of his countenance, which assures us of his approbation and mercy, and brings us peace.

(7) *Of Moses on Israel*: Deut. xxxiii. 2-29.

This poem, like the previous "Blessings of Jacob," in Gen. xlix., consists of a series of benedictions upon the tribes of Israel. Noting the character, or conduct, the position, or national function, of each tribe, the author gives it its mead of praise. Especially does he mention the goodness of God to Israel, both in the

desert, and in the land of Canaan. The poem differs from the previous one in that it omits Simeon; the blessings are all eulogistic; the praise of Joseph is celebrated with splendor, while that of Judah is meagre; and Levi, from being a tribe of violence, becomes God's saintly one. The spirit of the poem is hopeful, and buoyant, indicating that the condition of the people was that of settled and prosperous security. It represents the spirit of the northern kingdom, and was doubtless written to unify the nation, and awaken in it a sense of God's goodness.

Exordium.

2. Yahweh came from Sinai,
Rose from Seir upon them,
Shone forth from Mount Paran,
From myriads of altars came,
Poured from their right upon them.

3. Yea he loveth the peoples,
All his saints at thy side,
They who sat at thy feet,
Receiving thy word.

4. He ordained us a law by Moses,
A possession for Jacob's assembly,
And there was a king in Jeshurun,
When the heads of the people were gathered,
All the tribes of Israel together.

In this brief preface to the poem, the goodness of God to Israel in the desert is reviewed. Yahweh is represented as shining forth upon Israel in the desert

from the sacred mountains and their high places round about. Out of love to them he gives them his word at Sinai, is present at their right hand in the desert, and at length grants them, assembled, and united, a king in Canaan. The reading,

“From myriads of altars came,

From their right (hand) I poured forth upon them” of verse 2, seems a possible and suitable rendering of a difficult passage. The word *Eshdath* would be the imperfect, first person singular, of the Hebrew *shadah*, to shoot, or pour forth, and would mean, that God, like the rising sun, shone forth from their right hand upon them in all the effulgence of his glory. The necessary emendation of the text is of the very simplest kind.

Reuben.

6. Let Reuben live, not die,
But let his men be few.

In Gen. xlix. 3, 4, he was wanton as water, and would not excel. And he did not. Here, we have more a sorrowful statement of fact, than a wish. It corresponds with the position taken by Reuben in history, and the prophetic judgment upon his way. Becoming weaker, and weaker, he feebly maintained his existence.

Judah.

7. *And this to Judah, and he said,*
Hear the voice of Judah, Yahweh,
And bring him to his people;
He, with hand, contended for them,
Be 'gainst his foes a helper.

There is a marked difference between the praise of Judah in Genesis xlix. 9-12 and here.

Times have changed, and also the writers. Formerly, he was a young lion, strong, and fierce, resting on his prey; none daring to rouse him. His former confident hope to reach his own has continued with fruitless struggle. It now lives because it is worthy of reward. Then, he washed his garments in wine, now, he washes them in blood.

Levi.

8. *And of Levi he said,*

Thy Thummim, and thy Urim,
Be for thy saintly one,
Whom thou did'st try at Massah,
At Meribah's waters prove.

9. Who said of father and mother,
Them have I never seen;
Who acknowledged not his brethren,
His children had never known.

For thy word do they observe,
And thy covenant they keep,

10. Thy judgments unto Jacob,
Thy law to Israel teach.

They set incense in thy nostrils,
Whole burnt offering on thine altar,

11. May Yahweh bless his substance,
And receive of his hand's labour;
Smite through his opponents' loins,
From rising 'gainst him, his haters.

How different from the curse of Gen. xlix. 5, 6, where, because of the violence and cruelty of Simeon and Levi, they forfeited the sympathy of their fellows, and drew on themselves the judgment of God! Here, Levi alone, among the tribes, is worthy to guard the sacred lot of Israel; for he early proved his zeal for God, both at Sinai, and in the desert, and in the most impartial way, in Canaan, discharged the sacred duties of his office, offering sacrifice, and administering justice. Thus was he worthy of blessing, and protection.

Benjamin.

12. *Of Benjamin he said,*

The beloved one of Yahweh
By him shall safe reside,
All day long he shelters him,
Between his shoulders bides.

The tribe of Benjamin, beloved of the Lord, as Benjamin was of his father, dwelt hard by the temple of God to the north, and was secure. The Lord also compassed him about with perpetual hills, and, in his temple, dwelt in the hollow of his mountain home.

Joseph.

13. *And of Joseph he said,*

Blessed of Yahweh his land,
With gifts of heaven above,
And the deep that lieth beneath;

14. With the fruitful issue of sun,
And the precious produce of moon;
15. With riches of ancient mountains,
And the wealth of eternal hills;
16. With the bounty of earth and its fulness,
And his favour who dwelt in the bush;
May it come on the head of Joseph,
On his crown from brethren parted.
17. Majesty be his as the first-born of oxen,
His horns the horns of the bison;
With them may he toss the peoples,
All the ends of the earth together;
And they be myriads of Ephraim,
And they thousands of Manasseh.

So much like the benediction of Gen. xlix. 22-26, that, in parts, they are identical. The wish is expressed that the children of Joseph, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, might, as they did, enjoy, in their inheritance, the favour of God, in the richest blessings of heaven, and earth; be mighty against their foes, and greatly multiply and prosper.

Zebulun and Issachar.

18. *And of Zebulun he said,*
Rejoice O Zebulun in thy going,
And in thy tents O Issachar;
19. Yea call the peoples to the mountains,
And there in righteousness offer;
For the bounty of the sea they suck,
Of the sand the hidden treasure.

The tribes of Zebulun and Issachar, abundantly prosperous at home, and in their trade with maritime peoples, should call the nations to their mountain altars, and there offer thanksgiving unto God. They profited, both from the imports coming from afar, and from the treasures of the sand, both in gold and glass.

Gad.

20. *And of Gad he said,*
Blessed he that extendeth Gad,
Who dwelleth as a lioness,
Tearing arm and crown of head.
21. For himself, he saw that, first,
There was kept the leader's part;
Then he came with heads of people,
Wrought the righteousness of Yahweh,
And his judgments among Israel.

Gad, who from afar looks like a lioness, resting on, and tearing the arm and head of a man, is worthy of all blessing, and extension; for, after choosing his own portion, east of the Jordan, he crossed over, and assisted in the conquest of Canaan, and in the establishment of God's righteous rule in Israel.

Dan.

22. *And of Dan he said,*
Dan is a lion's whelp,
That leapeth forth from Bashan.

The character of a warlike people, who, dwelling in the mountain fastnesses on the edge of Bashan, sprang out upon their foes like a lion from its hiding.

Naphtali.

23. *And of Naphtali he said,*
O Naphtali, sated with favour,
And full of the bliss of Yahweh,
Heir of the sea, and the south.

Naphtali, which extended from the foot of Hermon, in the north, down to the west of the Jordan, and the sea of Gennesareth, was one of the most favoured portions of the land, being both well-watered, fertile, and varied in climate and soil. Naphtali received all these gifts as from God, and was satisfied with his goodness.

Asher.

24. *And of Asher he said,*
Blessed o'er sons be Asher,
Of his brethren the favoured;
His foot in oil immersed;
25. Thy bars of iron and brass;
As thy days thy rest.

Asher enjoyed the confidence and esteem of all the other tribes. The wish is that he might prosper abundantly, walking continually in the flowing oil of his land; that his defences might be strong, and he have uninterrupted rest all his days.

Conclusion.

27. None Jeshurun's God is like,
Riding on the heavens, thy might,
In his majesty, the skies.
God eternal is thy dwelling,
And beneath eternal arms,
Who the enemy thrust before thee,
And said to thee destroy.

28. Israel abideth safely,
The fountain of Jacob alone,
In a land of corn and wine;
His skies the dews drop down.
29. Happy art thou O Israel!
Who a people like to thee,
Saved of Yahweh, shield of help,
Thy sword of dignity?
Thus thy foes shall fawn to thee,
And thou tread down their sanctuary.

There is none like to Yahweh and none like his people. What he was to each tribe, he would be to the nation, granting them every blessing, and the protection of his strong arm.

(8) *Of Israel by Balaam*: Numbers xxiii. 7-10, 18-24; xxiv. 2-9, 15-25.

Balak, King of Moab, alarmed at the approach of Israel, who had lately defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites in battle, and now threatened his kingdom, sends far east to the soothsayer Balaam, of Pethor, entreating, and seeking to bribe him, to come and curse Israel, knowing that the curse of such a man is mighty. Determined to speak only the word of the Lord, and yet allured by the promise of honor and gain, Balaam goes. Thrice God opposes him in the way, but Balaam is blind to see what even his ass can see. When his eyes are at length opened, and he is convinced that his mis-

sion is contrary to the mind of God, he wishes to turn back. But God will not have it so. He must go forward, not to curse, but to bless Israel, and to declare her victory over all her heathen foes.

Balak, hoping that the word of God might change at different altars, takes Balaam successively to several, and, after earnest and increasing sacrifices, the mind of God is sought, but, with rising ecstasy, Balaam foretells the glorious destiny of Israel.

(a) *Song from the altar at Kirjath-huzoth*: Num. xxiii.
7-10.

7. Balak, king of Moab,
Brought me from Aram,
From eastern mountains.

Come, curse for me Jacob;
Come, execrate Israel;

8. How shall I curse,
Whom God cursed not?
How him revile,
Reviled Yahweh not?

9. For, from rock-top I saw him,
From the hills I beheld him.
Lo, a people lone dwelling,
'Mong nations not reckoned.

10. Who can Jacob's dust render,
Or the fourth of Israel number?
Let me die the upright's death,
My last end be as his.

After offering sacrifices with Balak upon seven altars, Balaam retired to the bare height above Kirjath-huzoth, alone, to receive the word of God, and, receiving it, returned to Balak. Balaam was greatly impressed with the view God gave him of Israel, its multitude, and individual strength. He cannot curse whom God has so blessed. He will rather be truthful, and die as an upright man.

(b) *From Zophim on Pisgah*: Num. xxiii. 18-24.

18. Arise, O Balak, and hear,
 O son of Zippor, attend,
19. God is not man, to lie,
 Nor son of man to repent.

- Hath he said not to do?
 Spake he not to confirm?
20. Lo, I have received to bless,
 He blesseth, I cannot return.
21. No evil in Jacob he perceived,
 Nor perverseness in Israel discerned;
 Yahweh, his God, is with him,
 The shout of a king among them.
22. God bringeth them forth from Egypt,
 His as the speed of the bison;
23. For in Jacob is no augury,
 Nor in Israel is there sorcery;
 At length shall it be said,
 Of Jacob and of Israel,
 Lo what the Almighty did!

24. Lo, as a lioness riseth a people,
And lifteth himself as a lion;
Resteth not till he eat his prey,
And drinketh the blood of the slain.

Returning from Pisgah, where Balak thought to place Balaam so that he might not see all Israel, Balaam declares to Balak the irreversible word, that God sees no cause for curse in Israel, that he dwelleth with them, and that they are preparing for victorious war.

(c) *From the altars on Beor*: Num. xxiv. 3-9.

3. Balaam, son of Beor, saith,
Saith the man of opened eye,
4. Saith who heareth words of God,
Seeth visions of Almighty,
Falling down, with eyes enlightened.
5. How goodly, O Jacob, thy tents,
O Israel thy tabernacles!
6. Spread out are they as valleys,
Beside the river as gardens:
As lign-aloes, Yahweh planted,
As cedars by the waters.
7. From his buckets shall waters flow,
Be on many waters his seed;
His king be higher than Agag.
His kingdom be exalted.

8. God bringeth them forth from Egypt,
His as the speed of the bison,
He'll eat up nations, his adversaries,
And crunch their bones to pieces,
And smite them through with his arrows.

9. He croucheth, lieth down, as a lion,
A lioness, who shall rouse him?
Blessed thy blessers,
Cursed thy cursers.

Balaam, with his eyes widely opened, in a trance, has a wider vision still of the far-stretching tents of Israel in the valley below, of the extension, and strength of the nation, of the presence of God with them in the past, and of the victorious and cruel war they are about to wage.

(d) At length Balak, in anger, would send Balaam away back to his own land. "I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou has altogether blessed them these three times." But Balaam, before returning, made declarations concerning many nations round about Israel. These may have been added by a later hand: Num. xxiv. 15-24.

15. Balaam, son of, Beor, saith,
Saith the man of opened eye,
16. Saith who heareth words of God,
Knowing knowledge of the Highest,
Seeing visions of Almighty,
Falling down, with eyes enlightened.

17. I shall see him, but not now,
Shall behold him, but not nigh,
Out of Jacob a star cometh,
Out of Israel sceptre riseth,
Which shall smite both sides of Moab,
And all sons of Seth subvert,
18. Yea Edom be a possession,
And Seir his enemy's right.
While Israel acteth valiantly,
19. They of Jacob tread in might,
And destroy the city's remnant.

The vision, here granted Balaam, is that of the rising power of Israel against the peoples east of the Jordan. In terrible war should he devastate and possess their land, and cut off even the remnant who seek to flee from the cities. Beyond the horizon of Balaam we see the sceptre of Christ's Kingdom rise to conquer and rule all nations.

(e) 21. *And he looked on Amalek, and took up his his parable, and said,*

Amalek was the first of nations,
But his end shall be destruction.

The nation of Amalek was powerful when Israel entered Canaan, but, in the time of Saul and David, their power was broken.

(f) 22. *And he looked on the Kenite, and took up parable, and said,*

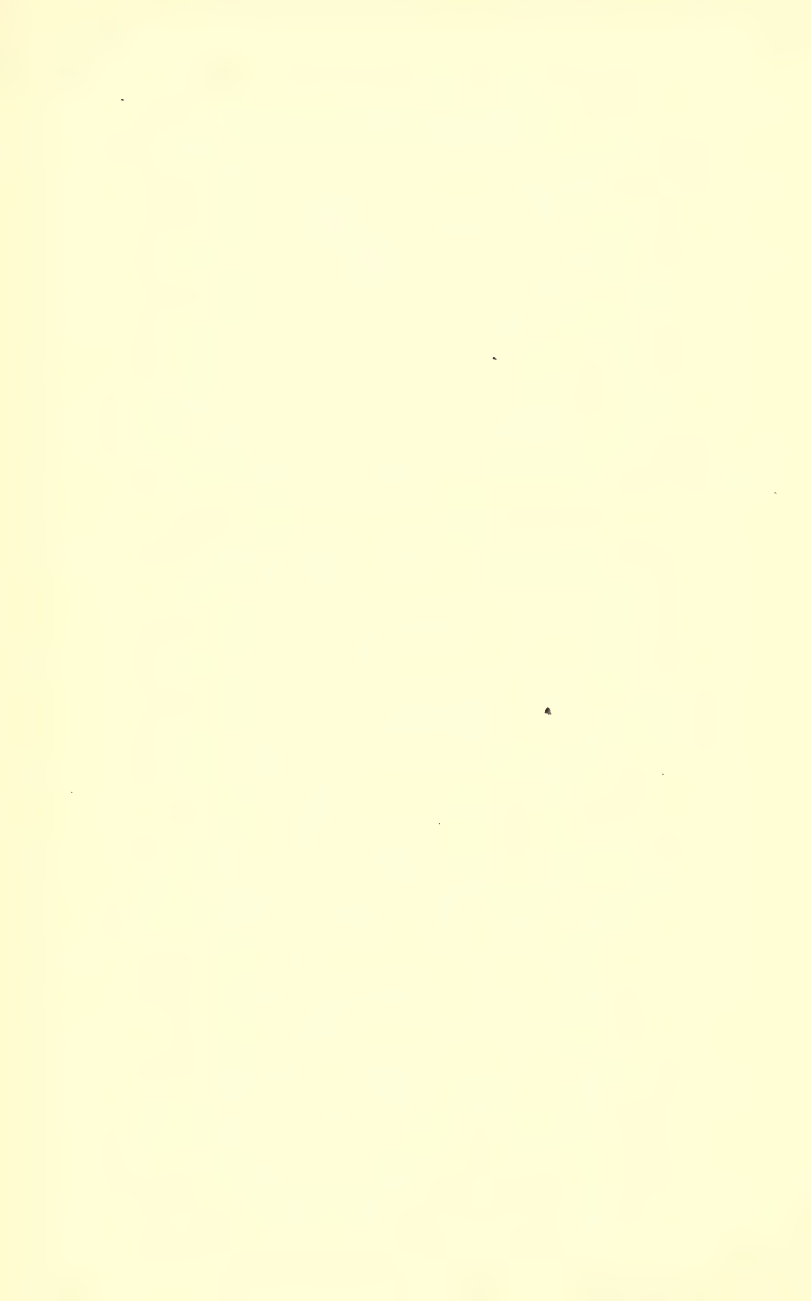
With thy nest set in the rock,
Strong is thy dwelling;
But when Asshur bears thee captive,
Kain is for burning.

A warning to the Kenite people, that, though their city Kain was high on a cliff, and strongly fortified, when the Assyrian would devastate their land their city would be burned.

(g) 23. *And he took up his parable, and said,*
Alas, who shall live
When God him establisheth!

24. For ships, come from Kittim,
Shall afflict Assur and Eber,
But he to destruction shall come.

The vision of the rise of a great western power, coming into conflict with Assyria, and probably with Israel, and overcoming them. This was fulfilled in the kingdom of Alexander, but his kingdom came to destruction.



III. WAR SONGS.

My feet like hind's feet he doth set,
And on my heights me place;
Mine hands doth teach to war, mine arm
To bend the bow of brass.

—2 Samuel xxii. 34, 35.

III.—*War Songs.*

The war songs of the Historical Books of Scripture, though not very numerous, are nevertheless of some considerable interest. Associated with, or arising from great national and religious crises, they were readily accepted by the people, and came down as a cherished treasure in their traditions, to be afterwards introduced into their history. An anthology of early war songs, in existence some time before the writing of the books of Numbers and Samuel, probably covered the early period of the people's history, and contained most of their early martial poetry. This book, called "The Book of the Wars of Yahweh," has disappeared, but we have some acknowledged, and doubtless other selections, from its poems. Many of the war songs may be very ancient, and contemporary with the event. Others are doubtless the composition of later authors.

1. *Song of the Sword of Lamech*: Gen. iv. 23, 24.
And Lamech said unto his wives,

23. Adah and Zillah! hear my voice,
 Ye wives of Lamech, my speech,
 A man, for wounding me, have I slain,
 A young man, for my breach;
 24. If Cain be avenged seven times,
 Then Lamech seventy and seven.

In this vain-glorying of Lamech we see the murderous sin of Cain, grow, and rise, into insolent defiance. Standing, as it were, over the prostrate form of a giant youth, whom he has slain, Lamech brandishes his sword, and, hailing his two wives, proclaims to them his victory. Not his to await, like Cain, the avenging of God. Far better the sword, forged by his own son Tubal-Cain, by which he was, and would be, able to overcome, and to defy his enemies.

2. *Song of Miriam, and Moses*: Exodus xv. 1-18, 21.

Pharoah, with his great army, pursued, and overtook Israel at the Red Sea, thinking to bring them back to bondage, or to destroy them. But God, by a mighty wind, opened a way through the sea, and Israel went through on dry ground. The Egyptians attempted to follow, but God brought back his waters, and overwhelmed the great Egyptian army. What wonder that such a great deliverance should impress the minds of the people, and come down the ages in triumphant song.

Praise of Yahweh.

1. I will sing unto Yahweh, for lofty is he,
The horse and his rider he's thrown in the sea;
2. My strength and song Yah, is become my salvation,
My God and my father's I'll praise and exalt him.

Yahweh a man of war.

3. Now Yahweh's a warrior, and Yahweh's his name,
4. Pharaoh's chariots and host hath he cast on the
main;

Sunk in the Red Sea, the choice of his riders,

5. Immersed in the depths like a stone went they
downwards.

6. Thy right hand, O Yahweh, is glorious in power,
O Yahweh, thy right hand the foe breaks asunder;

7. In thy greatness sublime, dost destroy thine oppon-
ents,
Thy wrath sendest forth and as stubble consumes
them.

Divided the sea.

8. By the blast of thy nostrils the waters amassed,
As heaps stood the floods, in the midst froze the
depths;
9. Said the foe I'll pursue, overtake, share the spoil,
Fill my soul, draw my sword, and my hand them
destroy;

Overwhelmed the foe.

10. Thou didst blow with thy wind, and the sea did
them cover,
And they sank down as lead in the turbulent waters.
11. Mid the gods, who is there that is like to thee,
Yahweh?
Like to thee, who is there in holiness so glorious,
So fearful in praises, a worker of wonders?

12. Thou didst stretch forth thy right hand, and the
earth ~~them~~ consumed,
13. And didst lead forth in mercy a people redeemed;
Thou didst guide in thy strength to the holy abode,
14. And, with very great trembling, the people gave
heed.

Fear before.

- On the dwellers in Philistia, a great horror seized,
15. And the rulers in Edom were with terror possessed;
The mighty in Moab were filled with dismay,
All abiding in Canaan have melted away;
16. There fell such a terror and trembling on them,
By the might of thine arm they are still as a stone,
Until that thy people, O Yahweh, pass over,
Till the people pass over whom thou hast secured.

Israel at Zion.

17. Thou shalt bring, and them plant, in the mount of
thy heritage,
The place for thy dwelling thou Yahweh hast made:
The altar, O Yahweh, thine hands have established.
17. For ever and ever thou Yahweh shalt reign.

And Miriam answered them,

21. Sing ye to Yahweh: for lofty is he,
The horse and his rider he's thrown in the sea.

A most graphic description of the miraculous deliverance of Israel, and of the complete overthrow of

the great Egyptian taskmaster. The effect too, on the nations before, is vividly noted; and the peace, and felicity of the people, brought to Zion. Miriam, like women in all ages, led the people of God in the song of welcome, and of victory.

3. *Book of the Wars of Yahweh.*

The historian of the Book of Numbers quotes a selection (Num. xxi. 14, 15) from a book of war songs, having some authority in his time. The citation is made to settle the boundary between Moab and Ammon. The other poems of the chapter are probably from the same book, and, as they all accompanied, and grew out of the march of Israel through the hostile lands of Moab and Ammon on their way to Canaan, they may all be presented together.

(1) *Crossing the Arnon*: Num. xxi. 14, 15.

14. Vaheb in Sufah (we passed),
And the valleys of Arnon,

15. Yea a gorge of the valleys,
That to Ar's seat is leading,
On the border of Moab reclining.

Israel, in their journey northward, passed Vaheb, and Sufah, cities of Southern Moab, and, going east, and north, they crossed the deep gorges of the Arnon river, which descend and unite at the ancient city of Ar, on the northern border of Moab.

(2) *Song of the Fountain*: Num. xxi. 17, 18.

17. Spring up, O well, sing it response,
18. O fountain, which nobles have digged;
They with sceptre, and staves;
Which chiefs of the people have delved.

From the Arnon, they went to Beer, the well, or place of wells, where, under the divine direction, and the lead of the chiefs of Israel, a well was dug, and the springing waters greeted by a fountain song.

(3) *The Taunt Song against Ammon*: Num. xxi. 27-30.

27. Come ye to Heshbon,
Let the city of Sihon
Be built and set up again.
28. For a fire went out from Heshbon,
A flame from the city of Sihon,
Which devoured Ar of Moab,
Consumed high places of Arnon.
29. Woe to thee Moab!
O people of Chemosh undone;
His sons gave he to flight,
His daughters to be captive,
To Sihon king of the Amorite.
30. Pierced we them through with arrows,
Perished Heshbon to Dibon;
Wasted we even to Nophah;
Which extendeth to Medebah.

From the Arnon, Israel sent unto Sihon, king of the Amorites, asking permission to cross his territory. Sihon refused, and came offering battle at Jahaz, in the south-east of his territory. Sihon was totally defeated, and his territory occupied by the Israelites. We have thus the taunt song, sung afterwards by the *môshêlîm*, or sarcastic singers in Israel.

It opens with the taunt of Israel to the Amorites, to come and rebuild their city, and then describes how, long before, Ammon had taken the place from Moab, putting their sons to flight, and taking their daughters into captivity.

Then comes the attack of Israel upon Ammon, in which the Ammonites were hotly pursued, and their land and cities wasted.

(4) *Yahweh as Leader*: Numbers x. 35, 36.

The author of the Book of Numbers lays hold of the remnant of an old ballad, probably taken from the Book of the Wars of Yahweh, to illustrate and enliven his story of Israel's march from Sinai through the desert. Their way was beset by many foes, but Yahweh was their leader, going before his people to battle, and then returning with the ark to abide in their midst. Hence, it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said,

35. O Yahweh, rise, and let
Thine enemies be scattered:
Before thee flee thy haters.

And when the ark rested he said,
35. O Yahweh, turn thou back
To myriad-thousand, Israel.

4. *The Book of Jashar.*

This is another anthology of the early martial songs of Israel. Only two brief selections are acknowledged as taken from this book, but other Old Testament poems may have belonged to it. The meaning of the name Jashar is uncertain. It is not a proper name, and may mean "heroes." We would thus have, "The Book of the Heroes."

(1) *Song of Joshua at Bethhoron:* Joshua x. 12, 13.

Gibeon, who was under siege of the Canaanite kings, because he had capitulated to Israel, called upon Joshua for relief. This was immediately granted, and, when Joshua, aided by a great storm of hail, drove the enemy from their stronghold, down the valley of Aijalon, his prayer was,

12. O sun, on Gibeah, be silent,
O moon, in the vale of Aijalon,
13. And the sun was silent,
And the moon stood still,
Till the nation revenged its foes.

Joshua's prayer was, that the day might be prolonged, and the night as well, so that they might com-

plete the destruction of their enemy as they pursued it down the valley of Aijalon. Opinion is divided as to whether Joshua wished for light or darkness. Those who think it was darkness cite the joyful reference to the hailstorm, taken as a token of divine favour, which would darken the sun. On the other hand, it would be most natural that Joshua should wish for light in pursuing an enemy down a dark valley, in which it might easily elude his pursuit.

(2) *David's Dirge over Saul and Jonathan*: 2 Sam. i.
19-27.

At the great battle between Israel and the Philistines, on the sides of Gilboa, Saul and Jonathan were slain, and their bodies put to shame. David, possessed by a noble generosity towards Saul, the Lord's Anointed, and, with true brotherly love towards Jonathan, pours out his own sorrow, and that of the nation in this beautiful dirge.

19. On thy heights, O Israel, the glory is slain,
The mighty, how fallen are they!
20. Nor in Gath tell, nor publish in Askelon's streets,
Lest Philistine daughters acclaim,
Uncircumcised daughters have joy.
21. On Gilboa heights let neither dew,
Nor rains, nor fields of offerings, rest;
For there, unanointed with oil,
Was shield of hero, shield of Saul, cast.

22. Not from the blood of slain,
Nor from the fat of mighty,
Did Jonathan's bow draw back.
Nor sword of Saul return empty.
23. Saul and Jonathan,
Lovely and benign,
Nor in life, nor death divided;
Swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.
24. Daughters of Israel,
Weep over Saul,
With scarlet and jewels
He clothed you,
Put adorning of gold
Your raiment upon you.
25. How fallen the mighty,
In the midst of the battle,
O Jonathan, slain on the heights!
26. Anguish is mine for thee, my brother
Jonathan, so pleasant to me;
Greater than love of womankind,
Thy wonderful love to me.
27. How fallen the mighty!
The war-weapons perished!

David was moved by a deep sense of pity, a feeling of patriotic shame, and by deep sorrow of heart, at the fall of Saul and Jonathan. Though Saul, in wild jealousy, had hunted him up and down the land, he was a great warrior, and true Israelite, and the thought

of Saul's great shield, ever bright, left lying to rust on Gilboah's heights, was too painful for him. The thought of two so great men, so close and confident in life, and falling together in death, was enough to stir the hardest heart. With him, David will have all Israel to mourn; for through them much blessing had come to the people. But for Jonathan David will weep alone; for

“Greater than love of womankind
Was thy wonderful love to me.”

(3) *The Dedication of the Temple*: 1 Kings viii. 12, 13.

At the dedication of the temple, when Solomon had taken the throne, and the voices of the great choir rang through the air, the place was suddenly filled with a great cloud of darkness, moving the people to awe and wonderment. Solomon rose and quieted their fears in the words of the song,

12. Yahweh hath said,
He would dwell in thick darkness,
But I've built thee a house of abiding,
Thy place of perpetual dwelling.

In the Septuagint this song, in a somewhat extended form, is found after verse 53, and reads as follows,

The Lord hath set the sun in the heavens,
And said he'd in darkness reside;
So I've built thee a house, becoming to thee,
Where thou mayest for ever abide.

This is followed by the words, "*Behold this is written in the Book of Songs,*" the last phrase being probably a mistaken translation of the Hebrew "*The Book of Jashar.*"

5. *The Song of Deborah*: Judges v. 2-31.

The tribe of Issachar had long been harassed by the inroads of their enemies, the Canaanites, who made both life and property insecure. This was patiently borne by the people, until it became unbearable, and then Deborah, a prophetess, arose, and, calling Balak to her side as leader, resolved to rid her land of the foe. A general summons was sent out to the tribes, and all except four responded. A great battle took place on the banks of the Kishon, the Canaanites were utterly defeated, and Sisera, their captain, fleeing, far north, was smitten to the ground by a mallet in the hand of Jael as he stood drinking in her tent. The poem is the most graphic war-song in all Scripture.

Refrain.

2. That in Israel leaders led,
That the people followed glad,
Bless ye Yahweh.

Prelude.

3. Hear O kings, O princes listen,
I to Yahweh, I will sing;
To Yahweh, Israel's God, will hymn.

Ancient coming of Yahweh.

4. Yahweh, in thy going forth from Seir,
In thy march from Edom's field,
The earth did shake, and heaven dripped,
Yea the clouds did waters yield;
5. From Yahweh's presence mountains flowed,
You Sinai, from Yahweh, Israel's God.

Evil conditions before the war.

6. In days of Shamgar ben Anath,
In Jael's day they quit the highways,
And travellers walked in by-paths,
7. Yea rulers failed in Israel, failed,
Until I Deborah arose,
Arose as mother in Israel.
8. Because they chose new gods,
Then were their gates in siege,
But mid forty thousand in Israel
Nor shield nor spear appeared.

Refrain.

9. My heart to the leaders in Israel,
And the people who volunteered.
Bless ye Yahweh.

Picture of Peace.

10. On white asses riding,
On tapestry sitting
By the way walking,
They chant.

11. Far from the archer shout,
Mid channels of water,
There they rehearse
The right acts of Yahweh,
His upright rule in Israel.

The Summons.

- Then down to the gates
Went the people of Yahweh,
Rouse, rouse, O Deborah,
12. Rouse, rouse, sound the note;
Rise Barak, make captive captives,
Thou son of Abinoam!

The Muster.

13. Then there descended
The remnant of nobles;
The people of Yahweh
Went down as heroes;
14. Went down out of Ephraim
They rooted in Amalek;
After thee Benjamin,
Down mong the people;
Went down out of Machir
They who were leaders;
Down out of Zebulun
They bearing the muster;
15. The princes in Issachar
Were with Deborah;
As was with Issachar
So was it with Barak;
Into the valley
Cast at his feet.

Rebuke and Contrast.

- Great were the heart resolves
At Reuben's water-heights;
16. Why satest thou mid sheep-folds,
Hearing pastoral pipes?
17. Why dwelt Gilead over Jordan?
Why tarried Dan in ships?
Why sat Asher at the sea-shore
Biding at mouth of creeks?
18. While life for death scorned the Zebulun race,
Naphtali too on the heights of the place.

The Battle.

19. The kings came on, and battle waged,
The kings of Canaan combat raged,
At Taanach, on Megiddo's springs;
But secured no silver gain.
20. From heaven they fought,
Stars from their high paths,
Fought against Sisera.
21. The river Kishon
Swept them away,
That ancient river,
The river Kishon.
22. Thou didst trample the strong, O my soul,
Where the horse's hoofs did smite,
Prancing, prancing, in their might.

The Curse on Meroz.

23. Curse ye Meroz, saith Yahweh's angels,
Curse, yea curse, its dwellers;
For they came not to Yahweh's help,
To Yahweh's aid 'mong heroes.

Praise of Jael.

24. Blessed among women is Jael,
The wife of Heber the Kenite,
Blessed among women in tent.

Slaying of Sisera.

25. Water he asked, and she gave him milk,
Brought curd in a lordly bowl;
26. Her hand she extended to the haft,
Her right to the workman's maul.
- Smote she Sisera, demolished his head,
Smashed, and broke in his temples,
17. At her feet he bowed, fell, lay;
At her feet he bowed, he fell;
Where he bowed, there fell dead.

In the palace of Sisera.

28. The mother of Sisera through lattice screen,
Out of the window peered, repined;
Why does his chariot fail to come?
The steps of his chariot tarry behind?
29. Her sagest princess made her reply,
Yea she answered her own request,

30. Have they not found, divided the spoil,
A maiden or two to each man at least?

Dyed robes for Sisera as booty too,
Dyed garments, adorned as prey,
Dyed vesture, double embroidered
On the necks of that stripped away.

Conclusion.

31. So perish all thine enemies O Yahweh,
His lovers he as sunrise in its strength.

6. *David's Dirge over Abner*: 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34.

After the death of Saul, Abner, his captain, secured for Ishbosheth, Saul's son, the allegiance of all the tribes, except Judah, which chose David. War between the north and south began, and, in the battle of the pool of Gibeon, Abner, hotly followed by Asahel, brother of Joab, turned upon him, and pierced him through with his spear. Because of displeasing insinuations made by Ishbosheth, Abner turned from him, and, making friendly advances, was hospitably entertained by David in Hebron. Scarcely had he departed on his new mission, when he was met by Joab, his old enemy, and revengefully, and mercilessly slain. David was deeply moved by the horrible crime, and not only pronounced a bitter curse on Joab, but made a public lamentation over the death of Abner, and wrote over him the following elegy:—

33. Was Abner to die
As dieth the base?
34. Thy hands were not bound,
Nor thy feet put in brass.
Thou didst fall as one falleth
Before children of wickedness.

In this David reflects on the strange irony of fate, by which this great warrior was to die like a simpleton, without honor or distinction, not on the high places of the field, but overpowered, helpless, alone.

7. *David's Hymn of Triumph*: 2 Sam. xxii. 2-51.

The great warrior-king, who has come through much tribulation, and been sorely pressed by his foes, is at last, by the blessing of God, victorious, and has entered into peace. He was encompassed by ungodly men, and all the terrors of death took hold upon him. He cried mightily unto God, and he wrought for him a great deliverance, a deliverance accompanied by the terrible storm and earthquake. God brought him out of many waters, delivered him out of the hand of his enemies, brought him into a wide place, and made him to have wide dominion. For all this he will praise and magnify his God. It will be readily seen that the psalm finds its best application and author in David. It is the same, with some minor differences as Psalm 18, and may have been a later recension.

Praise of Yahweh.

2. My refuge Yahweh is, and fort,
My rescuer, yea mine;
3. God of my rock, in whom I trust,
My shield and saving horn.
My refuge, and security,
My Saviour, saving from woes;
4. On Yahweh, worthy of praise, I'll call,
And so be saved from foes.

David's distress.

5. For waves of death surrounded me,
Ungodly floods affrighted,
6. The cords of Sheol compassed me,
Death's snares on me alighted.

His cry.

7. In my distress I Yahweh called,
And to my God cried I;
He from his temple heard my voice,
Came to his ear my cry.

His deliverance

8. The earth did shake, and agitate,
And heaven's foundations both
Did shudder, and did tremble sore,
Because that he was wroth.

Storm.

9. Smoke from his nostrils did ascend,
And, from his mouth, there came
Consuming fire, and coals, by it,
Were turned into flame.

10. The heavens also spread he out,
And thereby did descend,
And thickest clouds of darkness did
Beneath his feet attend.
11. And on a cherub did he ride,
And thereon too did fly;
Yea on the swift wings of the wind
Did he appear on high.

Darkness.

12. Pavilions round about did he
In deepest darkness set,
Great gathering of waters too,
And clouds of firmament.

Lightning and Thunder.

13. And from the sheen before his face
Were kindled coals of fire,
14. Yea Yahweh thundered from the heavens,
The most High uttered cry.
15. His arrows sent he far abroad,
Them widely scatter did,
And lightning sent he from his hand,
And them discomfited.

At sea.

16. The bottom of the sea appeared,
Bared earth's foundations vast,
At Yahweh's terrible rebuke,
His nostril's breathing blast.

Deliverance.

17. Me from above he sent and took,
Drew me from many waters,
18. Delivered me from my strong foe,
And from my too swift haters.

19. They came upon me in the day
Of my calamity,
But Yahweh, then as ever, was
Abiding stay to me.

Wide place.

20. Out to a place did he me bring,
That was both wide and free,
Deliverance also for me wrought
For his delight in me.

Clean hands.

21. According to my righteousness
Did Yahweh me reward,
According as my hands were pure
He paid to me regard.

Integrity.

22. For ways of Yahweh have I kept,
My God have not deserted;
23. Before me all his judgments were,
Nor from his statutes parted.

Fidelity.

24. From mine iniquity I kept,
And toward him perfect was;
25. Yahweh repaid my righteousness,
My cleanness in his eyes.

God and men.

26. Thou gracious to the kind will be,
To upright men upright,
27. Pure to the pure, unsavoury thou
Unto the perverse wight.
28. The afflicted people thou shalt save,
The high behold, cast down,
29. My lamp, O Yahweh thou shalt be,
Yahweh, my dark illumine.

His help.

30. Because of thee I rush a troop,
By my God leap a wall,
31. Complete his way, his word is tried,
Who trusts, a shield to all.

None other.

32. For who is God beside Yahweh?
A rock save our God?
33. A fortress strong is he to me,
The upright's way doth guide.

My strength.

34. My feet, like hind's feet, he doth set,
And on my heights me place;
35. Mine hands doth teach to war, mine arm
To bend the bow of brass.
36. Me hast thou given salvation's shield,
Thy gentleness made me great,
37. My steps beneath hast thou enlarged,
Nor did mine ankles shake.

My foes.

38. My foes will I pursue, destroy,
Nor turn till I complete,
39. Consume, and smite that they rise not,
But fall beneath my feet.

Victory.

40. With might thou girdest me for war,
Dost those who rise subdue,
41. Give me mine enemies the neek,
Mine haters, silence too.
42. They looked, but there was none to save,
To Yahwch, no reply;
43. I beat them small as dust of earth,
Them crushed, and spread like clay.

Exaltation.

44. Thou freed'st me from people's strife,
As head of nations kept me,
A people whom I have not known
Shall service render to me.

Sovereignty.

45. The stranger shall submit to me,
 Soon as they hear, obey,
 Shall gird, and from their covert come,
46. As aliens fade away.

Praise.

47. Now Yahweh lives, bless'd be my Rock,
 God, Rock of my salvation,
48. Exalted be, yea, even the God
 Who grants me vindication.
- Subduing peoples under me,
49. Out from my foes me leads,
 Up from opponents lifteth me,
 From violent men me frees.
50. Therefore to thee will I give thanks,
 The gentile folk among,
 And to thy name, O Yahweh, I'll
 Sing praises in a song.
51. A saving tower to his king,
 He mercy doth extend,
 To David, his anointed one,
 And his seed without end.

IV. ROYAL AND NATIONAL SONGS.

One ruling o'er men in righteousness,
Ruling in fear of God,
Is light of morn with rising sun,
A morning without clouds;
Like bright shining after rain,
Of green herb of the ground.

—2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4.

IV.—*Royal and National Songs.*

The remaining songs to be presented are each of a deeply religious nature, and deal with some phase of the national life.

1. *The Song of Moses*: Deut. xxxii. 1-43.

The object of this poem is to set forth the nature of God's dealing with Israel as a nation. Though he has been gracious to, and patient with them, they are crooked and deceitful. His goodness to their fathers is recalled, how he bore them as on eagle's wings in the desert journey, how he brought them into a goodly land. But they became sated, and forgot him, and vexed him grievously with their idolatry; he therefore threatens them with terrible destruction, and, were it not for the reproach of the heathen world, he would utterly blot them out. He will however bring upon them sore chastisement, and in this way bring them to true sorrow of heart, and a better life. The message of the poem, both in spirit and language, is that of the prophets.

Exordium 1. Heaven and earth called to attend because of the greatness of the poet's message.

- Listen, O heavens, and I will speak,
Let earth my discourse heed,
2. My teaching shall as rain descend,
As dew flow free my speech.

- As small rain on the tender grass,
As showers upon the herb;
3. For Yahweh's name will I proclaim,
Give greatness to our God.

God's uprightness and their perversity.

4. The Rock, who's perfect in his work;
For judgment's all his ways,
A faithful God, and without guile,
Just and upright he is.
5. They're wicked to him, and not sons,
To them it is a stain,
A generation crooked, and
Deceitful in their aim.
6. And do ye thus requite Yahweh,
O people foolish vain?
Is not thy Father thee secured,
Thee made and thee maintained?

God's goodness recalled.

7. Remember thou the days of old,
Note generation's years;
Thy father ask, and he'll thee shew,
And tell to thee thine elders.

8. When the Most High settled nations,
And divided sons of men,
He set the bounds of peoples by
The number of Israel's sons.
9. For Yahweh's portion is his people,
Jacob, the lot of his right;
10. In a wilderness land he found him,
In a desert's howling waste.
- Then did he round encompass him,
And of him didst take thought,
And as the apple of his eye,
He guarded him about.
11. As vulture stirreth up her nest,
And over her young hovereth;
Spreadeth broad her wings, them taketh,
Them on her pinions beareth;
12. So Yahweh led them forth alone,
And no strange god assisted.
13. On heights of earth he made him ride,
Eat increase of the field,
Yea honey from the crag to suck,
From rocky flint the oil.
14. Curds of kine, and milk of sheep,
Of lambs and rams the fat,
Of herds of Bashan, and he-goats,
With kidney fat of wheat;
To drink, for wine, the blood of grape.

Israel's defection from Jehovah through abundance.

15. Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked;
Grew fat, and plump, and sated,
Forsook the God who him had made,
Despised his Rock-salvation.
16. With strange gods they made him jealous,
With abominations vexed him;
17. To shedim, no-god, sacrificed,
To gods of no acquaintance.
- To new gods, come in of late,
Your fathers did not fear;
18. Unmindful of the rock begat thee,
Forgetting God thee bare.

Israel's punishment.

19. Yahweh saw it, and abhorred them,
For his vexing sons and daughters:
20. Said, I'll hide from thee my face,
I'll see what's their hereafter.
- For a race perverse are they,
No sons of faithfulness,
21. They with a no-god made me jealous,
Me vexed with vanities;
I'll make them jealous with no-people,
Vex them with vain nations.
22. For fire is kindled in my nostrils,
To the lowest Sheol burneth,
Devoureth earth, and its increase,
The base of mountains kindleth.

23. I'll multiply upon them evils,
Exhaust mine arrows on them,
24. They'll waste with hunger, and be burnt
With fever, and sore destruction.

- Upon them teeth of beasts I'll send,
With venom of dust-creepers;
25. Without the sword shall bereave,
And terror in the chambers;
Both youth, and maiden shall destroy,
Suckling, and men grey-haired.

Saved by foreign taunts.

26. I would have said, I'll scatter them,
Their memory take from men,
27. But that I feared the taunt of foe,
Lest adversary should misdeem,
Or say, our hand exalted is,
Not Yahweh hath all this done.

Why Yahweh threatened them.

28. For they're a nation, void of counsel,
Nor insight is in them;
29. Had they been wise, they had seen this,
Discerned their latter end.

Their ills are chastisement for sin.

30. How could one pursue a thousand,
Two make ten thousand flee,
Were it not their rock had sold them,
Surrendered them had Yahweh?

31. For their rock's not as our Rock,
Our enemies being the judges,
32. For their grape's from Sodom's vine,
And from Gomorrah's vineyard.

- Their grapes are grapes of poppy too,
Having bitter clusters,
33. Their wine, the venom of reptiles,
The cruel poison of cobras.

Calling for punishment.

34. Is not this laid up with me,
Amid my treasures sealed;
35. To me vengeance, and award,
What time their feet shall slide?
For their day of ruin's nigh,
Upon them hasteth fate.
36. But Yahweh will judge his people,
And over his servants repent him,
When he seeth their strength is gone,
Nor bound nor free is left him.

Experience will teach.

37. Then will he say, Where is their god,
The rock, where they did hide,
38. Who ate their sacrificial fat,
And drank their wine libation?
Let them arise, and be your help,
Be o'er you for protection.

39. Lo, now, for I, even I, am he,
No other god with me,
I kill, and I do make alive,
Have wounded, and do heal;
None from my hand sets free.

God's solemn vow of relief.

40. For I lift up my hand to heaven,
And say as I live ever,
41. If I do whet my glittering sword,
Mine hand on judgment seize,
I'll render vengeance on my foes,
And recompense my haters.
42. I'll make mine arrows drunk with blood,
My sword on flesh shall feed,
From the blood of slain and captive,
From the enemy's hairy head.

Conclusion.

43. Rejoice, O nations, with his people,
He'll avenge his servant's blood;
He'll render vengeance to his enemies,
Expiate his people's land.

2. *David's Last Words*: 2 Samuel xxiii. 1-7.

David, the sweet singer of Israel, acknowledges both his call and inspiration to be of God: and, out of his long experience as ruler, and the wisdom God had given him therein, he, when quite old, speaks of the blessing of a good ruler to a people. He is like the

morning sun in a cloudless sky, after a night of misrule, and like the green grass lustrous after rain, The equity and justice of David's rule were all of God, who had made covenant with him, a covenant which would be surely fulfilled. The severity of his dealing with the wicked was necessary, just as necessary as that of the husbandman who would get rid of thorns.

Some there are who view the poem as by a later hand, and, though written in his name, expressing the exalted view which the nation had of him, and his rule. This would meet the difficulty one feels in having David speak of himself as "The joy of Israel's psalter." The song is in harmony with many other parts of Scripture, which speak approvingly of the gracious and righteous rule of David, and in fact created him the royal content of the blessed messianic hope of the people. These passages all find their satisfaction in Christ, who came as

"One ruling o'er men in righteousness,
Ruling in fear of God."

David the speaker.

1. David, son of Jesse, saith,
Saith the man exalted,
The ancient one of Jacob's God,
The joy of Israel's psalter.

His Inspiration.

2. The Spirit of Yahweh spake in me,
On my tongue is his word,
3. Which God of Israel spake to me,
The Rock of Israel told.

Praise of the just ruler.

- One ruling o'er men in righteousness,
 Ruling in fear of God,
 4. Is light of morn with rising sun,
 A morning without clouds;
 Like bright shining after rain
 Of green herb of the ground.

Source of the ruler's help.

5. For is not thus my house with God?
 He covenant made with me,
 Eternal, fixed in all, secure;
 Yea all my safety and desire;
 Shall it not spring to be?

His severity vindicated.

6. For godless ones, like thorns, are all
 But to be thrust quite out;
 For not by hand can they be ta'en,
 7. But he that toucheth upon them,
 With iron and spearshaft must be armed,
 With fire them burn to ground.

3. Psalm of Praise to Yahweh: 1 Chronicles xvi. 7-16.

After David was established king over all Israel, he gathered the people together to bring up the ark from Obed-edom to Zion. After they had done so, a service of thanksgiving was held, at which Asaph and his brethren sang praises unto God. Parts of three psalms were sung, the 105th, the 96th, and the 106th, and are

here united. Any differences found between the text here and in the psalms may be accounted for in the nature and necessity of the service.

Yahweh's Praise.

His name.

8. Give praise to Yahweh, call his name,
And show his deeds mong peoples;
9. Sing him, yea praises sing to him,
And speak of all his marvels.
10. And glory in his holy name,
In heart joy Yahweh's seekers;
11. Search ye for Yahweh, and his strength,
And seek his face for ever.

His works.

12. Think on the marvels which he wrought,
His signs and judgments spoken,
13. Ye seed of Israel his servant,
Ye sons of Jacob chosen.

His covenant.

14. He is Yahweh our God,
In all the earth his judgments,
15. Remembered hath his covenant ever,
His law a thousand ages.

16. The covenant he with Ab'ram made,
And unto Isaac sware,
17. Confirmed to Jacob for a statute,
A covenant to Israel ever,
18. Saying, I'll give thee Canaan land,
The lot of your possession.
19. When ye were but few in number,
Very few, and they sojourners,
20. From nation to nation, and kingdom
To people, afar they wandered.
23. Sing ye to Yahweh all the earth,
His salvation daily proclaim;
24. Declare his glory mid the nations,
His marvels all people among.

Yahweh and idols.

25. For Yahweh's great, to be greatly praised,
O'er all gods to be revered,
26. For all gods of the people are idols,
But Yahweh made the heavens.

His worship.

27. Honor and majesty are before him,
Strength and gladness in his place;
28. Give to Yahweh. O kindreds of people,
Give to Yahweh glory and praise.
29. Give to Yahweh his glorious name,
A gift bring, and draw near;
30. Worship Yahweh in beauty of holiness,
All earth before him fear.

His rule.

- The world is also stablished,
That it cannot be moved ;
31. Let heaven be glad and earth rejoice,
Mong peoples say, Yahweh rules.
32. Let ocean and its fulness roar,
The field, its all, have mirth ;
33. Let trees of wood 'fore Yahweh joy,
Who cometh to judge the earth.

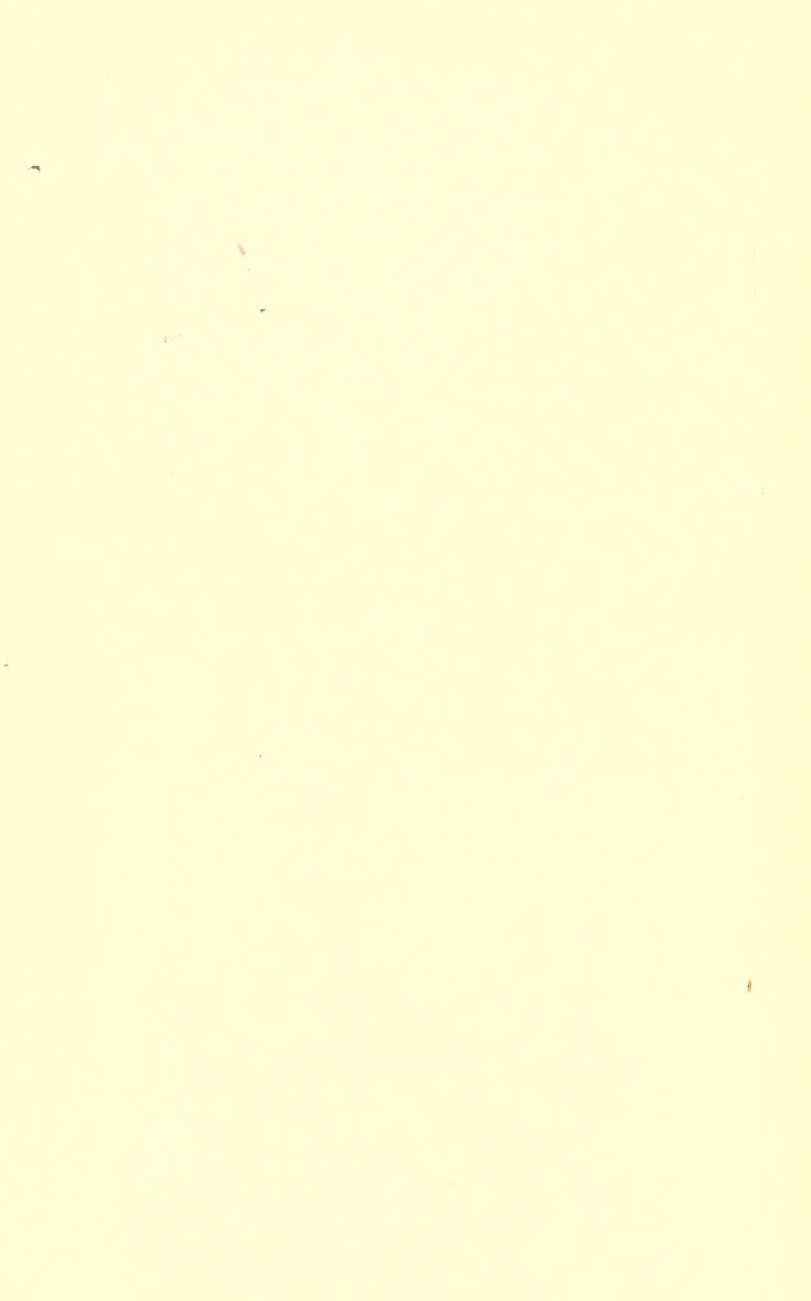
His goodness.

34. Give thanks to Yahweh, for he's good,
His mercy all duration ;
35. Then say ye, save, O save thou us,
O God of our salvation.
- Yea gather, and deliver us,
From among the nations,
To celebrate thy holy name,
And triumph in thy praises.

His praise.

36. Blessed Yahweh, God of Israel,
From ever and for ever ;
And all the people said, Amen !
Did praise to Yahweh render.

The last two lines are not in the poem in the Hebrew.



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